

The Monthly Minute

With State Senator John Pappageorge

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2007 Legislative Accomplishments

Dear Friend:

While the beginning of 2008 is filled with much hope and promise, I would like to take a moment to reflect on 2007. With the Governor and the House of Representatives controlled by the Democratic Party and the Senate by the Republican Party, I knew that we were all going to need to overcome partisanship and work together to move our state forward. Unfortunately, a political and ideological battle over how to resolve our state's \$1.75 billion budget deficit played out in headlines across the country. What are lost on many people, however, are the positive changes that were also made during this time.

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Major strides were made last year in the way of consumer protection. I introduced legislation that protects residents from potential theft of their Social Security number, a crime that is growing rapidly across the country. This bill was approved by both chambers and signed into law. My colleagues and I also passed the "Good Builders Law". This law puts the state in a position to finally crackdown on unlicensed and unethical builders. For more information on this new law, please visit: <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2007-SB-0452>

In addition, legislation banning the sale of lead contaminated toys was unanimously passed by both chambers, a measure that will go far in protecting children from the dangers of lead poisoning. See page 3 for more information on this new law.

In November, I introduced Senate Bill 907 to increase environmental protection. This legislation is part of the Green Michigan Initiative, which focuses on the Great Lakes and water protection, expansion of recycling in Michigan, development of green energy alternatives, and reduction of waste in Michigan landfills. For more information on the Green Michigan Initiative, please visit: http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/Special_Projects/GreenMichigan/Green_Michigan_Initiative_Fall_2007.pdf

We also started the first-ever Michigan Conservation Week to observe the importance of conservation. Key legislative packages designed to promote conservation and protect traditional outdoor activities, such as hunting and fishing, were unveiled and later passed the Senate. For more information on Conservation Week, please visit: <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2007-SR-0033>

I believe we all have reason to look forward with some optimism to the coming year. I don't see Michigan's struggling economy as an end, but rather a means to achieving positive and lasting reforms to the way government operates. I'll be saying more about this in the coming months.

I will again focus my efforts on reducing the burdensome rules and regulations that prevent businesses from coming to this state. I will also continue to find ways to streamline government in order to make it more efficient and effective for you the taxpayer.

Turning around our economy won't happen overnight. Together we can make 2008 a great year to live, work and raise a family in Michigan.

Sincerely,


John Pappageorge



House Committee Hears Testimony on Pappageorge Resolution



Members of the House Appropriations Committee heard testimony recently on a constitu-

tional amendment designed to foster more responsible management of Michigan's budget and help prevent future deficits, said sponsor Sen. John Pappageorge.

"I was honored to share the details of my legislation with an open-minded House Appropriations Committee," said Pappageorge. "The state government must start balancing its budgets like Michigan residents do - we shouldn't spend money we don't have. My resolution will simply prevent the state from treating an estimate the same as actual money in a drawer. We need to get real about the state's financial picture and this is a step in the right direction."

Senate Joint Resolution E would

limit the governor from proposing a budget greater than 96 percent of the estimate presented at the January Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference.

The Legislature, in turn, could not approve a comprehensive budget greater than 96 percent of the January estimate. The restriction is applied only to General Fund and School Aid Fund money and is transferable between budgets. This allows resources to be prioritized, as long as the two budgets combined are no more than 96 percent of the estimate.

A 10-year moving average of consensus revenue estimates to actual revenues revealed that revenues have come in at 96 percent of estimates. For the past five years the Legislature spent a considerable amount of time and energy finding ways to make up the difference by borrowing or raising taxes.

"Senator Pappageorge has combined a shrewd diagnosis of our state's fiscal dysfunction with a common-sense prescription for reform," said Rep. Chuck Moss, R-Birmingham, a member of the House Appropriations Committee.

While the fiscal analysts do fine work in Pappageorge's opinion, the estimates are never reliable because no matter how sophisticated the manipulation, the data is still inadequate.

According to Pappageorge, part of the problem lies in the misconception that the January estimate is perceived to be a revenue promise to all those receiving state funding. The estimate "promise" is 22 months away from becoming actual revenue and consistently falls short of expectations.

If implemented, SJR E should improve Michigan's bond rating.

One-Page Mortgage Loan Disclosure Form Discussed in Committee

The Senate Banking and Financial Institutions Committee recently heard testimony regarding an innovative one-page mortgage loan disclosure form that will help borrowers better understand the terms and requirements of their mortgages.

Alex J. Pollock, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, testified before the committee about the use of the mortgage disclosure form, "Basic Facts About Your Mort-

gage Loan." The form will help tell borrowers what they need to know about their mortgage loans in a clear and straightforward way.

The Federal Trade Commission recently concluded from a survey that borrowers do not understand key loan terms. Approximately 33 percent of borrowers could not identify the interest rate of their loans, 50 percent could not name the loan amount and 66 percent did not

realize their loan included a prepayment penalty.

Senate Bill 924 creates the one-page disclosure form. The bill was referred to the Senate Banking and Financial Institutions Committee for further consideration.



New Law Bans Sale of Lead Contaminated Toys



Legislation banning the sale or transfer of toys and child care items that contain

lead unanimously passed both chambers recently.

Public Act (PA) 159 of 2007 prohibits a person from using or ap-

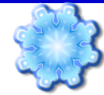
plying a toxic substance in or on any toy or child care article. It also prohibits a person from selling, offering for sale, or transferring such an item in Michigan. The prohibitions would not apply to a collectible toy not marketed to or intended to be used by a minor.

According to the *New York Times*, the Consumer Product Safety Commission said 38 of approxi-

mately 39 lead-related recalls this year were of Chinese-made products. The *Times* reported some Chinese factories choose to use paint with higher levels of lead because it can cost significantly less than those with lower lead amounts.



Snowmobile Safety



Michigan's winter fun starts heating up when the air chills and the snow flies. That's when snowmobile enthusiasts take to the trails to experience the fun and adventure of the sport. With a network of 6,200 miles of groomed trails and postcard-pretty scenery, Michigan has some of the best riding in the Midwest, if not the country!

In fact, Michigan registers more snowmobiles than any other state in the country. Our state is also a popular destination for thousands of visitors. With so many enjoying Michigan's winter wonderland, it's important to know the rules and ride with care.



Last year, 24 people lost their lives in snowmobile accidents, and many more were injured. Most of the fatalities and serious injuries involved alcohol or excessive speed. Safe and responsible sledding cuts the risks but not the fun. Before heading out on the trails, keep these safety tips in mind:

- Don't drink. It is illegal to operate a snowmobile in Michigan while under the influence of alcohol.
- Slow down. It is against the law to travel at a rate of speed greater than is reasonable for existing conditions.
- Know the conditions. Be well prepared for any contingency.
- Wear a helmet. State law requires that riders wear a USDOT approved helmet.
- Never ride alone. Arrange to travel in groups.
- Dress appropriately, carry a first aid kit and safety gear.
- Avoid travel on frozen bodies of water.
- ♦ Leave a travel plan. Let someone know your destination and timetable.

For other helpful news and information, please visit the DNR website at www.michigan.gov/dnr to access full snowmobile rules and regulations, or to locate a snowmobile safety course. As you take to the trails, I wish you and your family a safe ride this winter season.

*** Gas Saving Tips ***



We've all felt the burden that rising gas prices have placed on our family budget. Use these helpful tips to start saving money at the pump today.

- ♦ Double up. Consolidate trips and errands when possible.
- ♦ Not so fast. Gas mileage decreases rapidly at speeds above 60 mph.
- ♦ Be smooth. Aggressive driving and rapid starts and stops waste gas.
- ♦ Don't idle. Turn off the engine if the wait is more than one minute.
- ♦ Use the cruise. Drive at a steady speed by using cruise control on the highway.
- ♦ Lighten up. Excess weight in the trunk, car top carriers and bike racks make engines work harder.
- ♦ Reduce drag. Keep windows closed on the highway during the warm months.

Resources

Search the internet at home or the library for helpful information.

Gas Mileage Tips:

www.ftc.gov
www.fueleconomy.gov

Check Average Gas Prices:

www.michigan.gov/gasprices

Carpool Parking Lot Map

www.mi.gov/parkandride

File a Consumer Complaint on

Gas Gouging

Michigan Attorney General
1-877-765-8388

2007 Tax Guides

My office will have guides for the 2007 Tax year available soon. Contact us at the information below to request your free booklet.

Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or comments regarding information in this newsletter, or wish to be removed from or added to the mailing list, please contact my office at the following information:



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